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Department of State TELEGRAM

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Saigon 8740
10-18-67

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EXCISE E

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ACTION EA 19

INFO GPM 03,SC 01,RSC 01,USIA 12,H 02,NSC 10,L 03,INR 07,P 04,CIA 04,
DOD 01,SP 02,SS 20,NSAE 00,SAL 01,SAH 03,NIC 01,ACDA 17,IO 21,
AID 30,RSR 01,/163 W

R 180810Z OCT 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9063
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC FOR POLAD
AMCONSUL DANANG
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 1/26/82
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 8740

SUBJ: LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS: KIEN TUONG

REF : SAIGON 6730

1. REFTEL REPORTED BASIC BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON THE 5 PERSONS WHO INTITIALLY FILED FOR THE LOWER HOUSE FROM KIEN TUONG, WHERE ONE SEAT IS AT STAKE. FOUR OF THESE HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED FROM THE RACE LEAVING THE KIEN TUONG SEAT UNOPPOSED, THE ONLY UNCONTESTED VIETNAMESE SEAT. THIS HAS CAUSED SOME CONSTERNATION AND CONFUSION, AND

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THERE HAVE BEEN VARIOUS SUGGESTIONS TO RESCHEDULE THE ELECTION OR TO POSTPONE IT. SUSPICION HAS BEEN GENERATED THAT PRESSURE FROM GVN OFFICIALS IN SAIGON IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS SITUATION. NEVERTHELESS, THE

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ELECTION WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE HELD WITH HOA HAO LE MINH CHIEU THE WINNER.

2. CHIEU WAS BORN IN AN GIANG IN 1922; HE IS PRESENTLY A MERCHANT IN SAIGON. PAST EXPERIENCE INCLUDES SERVICE AS CAPTAIN IN HOA HAO ARMY, EMPLOYMENT WITH KIEN TUONG CIVIC ACTION PROGRAM 1956-60, AND WORK AS A MEDICAL ORDERLY IN SAIGON.

3. FOUR PERSONS WERE ELIMINATED FROM THE RACE:

A. VU NGUYEN BICH, AN RVNAF DOCTOR PRESENTLY SERVING IN III CORPS; HAD SERVED IN KIEN TUONG AS WELL.

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HE WAS UNABLE TO GET LEAVE (ELIMINATED ACCORDING TO PROVISIONS OF LOWER HOUSE ELECTION LAW ARTICLE 15, SECTION 9). BICH WAS SAID TO BE WELL LIKED AND RESPECTED AND WOULD HAVE MADE A STRONG CONTENDER.

B. TRAN VAN NGU, DISCHARGED FROM ARVN IN 1959 FOR DISCIPLINARY REASONS, THUS DISQUALIFIED UNDER PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 11, SECTION 8 OF LAW. FORMERLY CAO DAI, NGU CONVERTED TO CATHOLICISM AFTER MARRIAGE TO A CATHOLIC. PROVINCIAL COUNCIL MEMBER. NGU APPEALED TO CENTRAL ELECTION COUNCIL AND LOST.

C. PHAM VAN ANH, RECENT CONVERT TO HOA HAO FAITH. HE WAS DISQUALIFIED BECAUSE HE FAILED TO SUBMIT HIS BIRTH CERTIFICATE (ARTICLE 15, SECTION 1). ANH IS MEMBER OF PROVINCIAL COUNCIL AND RAN A STRONG SECOND IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY RACE LAST YEAR. IT IS SOMEWHAT ODD THAT EXPERIENCED POLITICIAN LIKE ANH SHOULD OVERLOOK ROUTINE DOCUMENT LIKE BIRTH CERTIFICATE; SOME IN PROVINCE SAY REAL REASON FOR HIS DISQUALIFICATION WAS THAT

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HE IS BELIEVED TO HAVE RELATIVES IN THE VC (THIS DID NOT ELIMINATE CHIEU, OF CO' SE). ANY APPEALED TO CEC AND LOST.

D. VO VAN NGAN, ELIMINATED FOR HAVING INSUFFICIENT DOCUMENTATION (ARTICLE 15). NGAN APPARENTLY SUBMITTED NO PAPERS WHATSOEVER, PROBABLY CHOOSING THIS AS WAY OF BOWING OUT OF RACE WITHOUT FORMAL WITHDRAWAL. HE WAS NOT CONSIDERED IMPORTANT CONTENDER.

4. PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS AND OTHER OBSERVERS ARE QUITE DISTURBED AT FACT NO CHOICE WILL BE OFFERED TO KIEN TUONG VOTERS, BUT PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS SAY THEY CAN DO NOTHING. NEW PROVINCE CHIEF (WHO HAS BEEN IN OFFICE ABOUT THREE WEEKS) SAYS ALL THIS HAPPENED BEFORE HE ARRIVED. HE SAYS HE HAS REQUESTED SAIGON TO POSTPONE KIEN TUONG ELECTION IN VIEW OF SITUATION, BUT THAT THIS WAS NOT APPROVED ON GROUNDS THAT ELECTION LAW HAS BEEN OBSERVED IN EVERY RESPECT. DEPUTY FOR ADMINISTRATION FEARS THAT PEOPLE WILL MANIFEST THEIR ANGER AT LACK OF

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CHOICE BY INVALIDATING BALLOTS OR STAYING AWAY FROM THE POLLS.

5. CHAIRMAN OF PROVINCIAL COUNCIL HAS SENT LETTER TO PROVINCE CHIEF CITING FACT THAT CHIEU'S BROTHER IS BELIEVED TO BE ACTIVE LOCAL VC CADRE. CHAIRMAN THUS ARGUES THAT KIEN TUONG ELECTION SHOULD BE POSTPONED ACCORDING TO PROVISION OF ARTICLE 37 OF ELECTION LAW WHICH STATES THAT "IN THE EVENT A CANDIDATE WINS BUT FAILS TO BE VALIDATED ... AN ELECTION TO CHOOSE HIS REPLACEMENT WILL BE ORGANIZED WITHIN THREE MONTHS." PROVINCE CHIEF SAYS HE IS AWARE OF CHIEU'S FAMILY COMPLICATIONS BUT POINTS OUT THAT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE AGAINST CHIEU PERSONALLY.

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5. IT HAS BEEN REPORTED TO AMERICAN ADVISORS IN KIEN TUONG THAT A RELATIVE OF [redacted] A GVN OFFICIAL WITH TIES TO PRIME MINISTER KY, ADDRESSED [redacted] A LETTER TO PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS "DEMANDING" THAT [redacted] ELECTION BE INSURED. SUCH AN INSTRUCTION MAY EXIST, BUT [redacted]

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IT SEEMS IMPROBABLE THAT IT WAS COUCHED IN TERMS WHICH WOULD FORCE PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS TO ENSURE DISQUALIFICATION OF ALL OTHER CANDIDATES.

6. ADDING TO AURA OF SUSPICION ABOUT DISQUALIFICATION, HOWEVER, IS FACT THAT THREE OF DISQUALIFIED CANDIDATES WERE PROMINENT LOCAL PERSONALITIES ENJOYING RESPECT IN COMMUNITY. CHIEU ON OTHER HAND IS A RELATIVE STRANGER.

7. OUTLOOK IS, HOWEVER, THAT ELECTION WILL BE HELD AS SCHEDULED. OFFICIAL OPINION SEEMS TO BE THAT THIS HAS BEEN AN UNHAPPY TURN OF EVENTS BUT THAT AS LAW HAS BEEN OBSERVED, THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN BE DONE.

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